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R PORT OF NEW YORK AUTHORITY

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REPORT ON ASBESTOS SPRAY USED IN CONSTRUCTION

JIM JENSEN: The City of New York served interim regulations today on all construction sites using asbestos spray. The aim being to reduce the hazard of this comparatively little known air pollutant. Science editor Earl Ubell reports on the problem of asbestos spray.

EARL UBELL: More than 5,000 tons of asbestos composition fireproofing is being sprayed on the steel columns of the World Trade Center building behind me, and on its twin, which is to my right.

That asbestos composition can be a danger to human health.

Bare steel columns need fireproofing because, although steel doesn't burn, it loses its strength when it gets hot, and if that were to happen with this 102 story building, that could be a disaster. But the asbestos can also get into the lungs of the workers and cause lung cancer, or it can float through the air and get into the lungs of passers-by.

The physicians and scientists at Mr. Sinai Medical School, after studying the problem for years, are worried and they are pressing for new regulations. The World Trade Center has taken extra precautions;

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canvases on the outside to keep the stuff from flying off the site, and canvases inside, too.

Ray Monte, the World Trade Center's construction manager admits that some does get away.

RAY MONTE: Well, it's a rather small proportion. We haven't measured exactly the percentage, but it's a small proportion that gets away when the canvases are moved, but normally during the spray operation none gets out.

UBELL: Why did you take these precautions? Many buildings in New York don't seem to be taking them.

MONTE: Well, that's correct. We've been operating with the other authorities on this problem of containing the spray material within the work area. We felt it was important on our project to cooperate with them.

UBELL: What about the men themselves?

MONTE: The men themselves are required to wear respirators, and they do as a rule. We have an occasional case where if a man's smoking a cigar, the cigar will get in the way of the mask, but I would say we have 99% compliance by the workmen.

UBELL: What sort of extra costs have been involved in doing it this way rather than just spraying without the canvases or doing the other things?

MONTE: Well, obviously there is an extra cost of handling, buying the canvases which amounts to a considerable amount of money. The contractor is spending this money right now, on this work.

WILLIAM NICHOLSON: I think the Port Authority and the World Trade Center and general contractor Tishman have gone a great distance in containing

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[redacted]	Falvey	Goodman Katz		Johnson	Montanus		Maynard							Schwalb
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		Kennelly Hurwitz												

the asbestos. They have excellent tarping, there are other things that could be done to improve it, but they have done more than any other construction site I've seen.

UBELL: There are other construction sites which are not doing as well, what are they?

DR. WILLIAM NICHOLSON: Virtually all the other construction sites in New York City that are now spraying asbestos.

UBELL: Here are some of the other sites. Dr. Nicholson, who is a physicist, says that his survey has revealed large amounts of asbestos in the neighborhoods of these buildings. Once asbestos fibers get into the lungs, they do not get out. Among asbestos workers the fibers, in conjunction with cigarette smoke, cause lung cancer. All together half the men who work with asbestos eventually die of some form of cancer. Others, passers-by, people in the neighborhood who are exposed to asbestos, sometimes come down with a strange lung disease some 20 years later. But, of course, not in every case.

(NOTE: following film goes back to World Trade Center site)

Although the effort is being made to contain the asbestos at this construction site, at other places in New York City the record is not so good.

Earl Ubell, WCBS-TV News.